

Funeral

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Summary: On the brink of the end of the Kira case--and, incidentally, his own demise--L experiences something that makes him reevaluate his own priorities, and makes him consider if he is really going to die for Justice. LxRaito, Raito POV

Chapter 1: Funeral

You're quiet. But then, you're often quiet. It's different now, though, I'm sure. It has to be; you're L, yes, I know. But I also have just spent months living with you and I know when you're troubled.

You should be, too. I don't blame you. I should be taking advantage of your obvious depression, but I can't bring myself to just yet. Some residual Stockholm Syndrome-esque symptoms.

I feel . . . I feel sorry for you. I *feel* for you, period. That hasn't happened for me in . . . a very long time. Maybe not ever. Well, that's not true. I felt for my sister, sometimes, when we were younger. And every so often, when I would think about it hard enough, I'd feel something for my mother or my father, some flare of unsettled emotion that threw me off enough that I would mostly try to ignore them from then on.

But now, with you—and earlier, especially, when I still believed myself innocent. I remember looking at you and actually feeling something for you. Or feeling something because of you. You are the only person I've ever met, L, who can create real emotion in me. I felt happiness, contented, when we were bantering back and forth. I felt sad, scared, when you would call me Kira. I would be angry enough with you to fight you. And I felt affectionate enough to kiss you.

But the point is, I liked you. Like you, despite my best efforts. I don't want to kill you . . . though that probably means that I ought to. I'm thinking about it. I was prepared to do it, too, earlier. Before . . . all this mess.

Even when we were chained together, you didn't seem all that human. You provoked genuine reactions and emotions from me all the time, but I almost never was able to do the same to you. It was discouraging then. Living with you felt simultaneously exhilarating and exhausting, stimulating and frustrating. You were very much like a computer. Insert strawberries, produce theorems. You are a mathematical equation, and even though I'm usually so good at math, I couldn't quite figure you. It was . . . well, it was frustrating, as I've said.

But now . . . now you're sad and unsettled and frustrated and angry, and I can tell that you're having a difficult time holding all this in. You dismissed the rest of the team, but I chose to stay with you, partly out of fear of what you would do when I wasn't within earshot, and partly because . . . I'm worried for you. Worried about what all this will do to you.

You didn't cry during the funeral. I didn't expect you to. If you had, I wouldn't have known what to do. You came to it, though, which surprised me. I know how very much you despise going out in public, how the anxiety eats at you, how the unfamiliar circumstances lower your reasoning abilities.

You didn't cry on the way there or the way back, or . . . well, you didn't cry at all. You aren't crying now. You're just sitting there, watching the screen in front of you, occasionally pressing the rewind and pause buttons as you try to figure this all out.

I didn't cry at the funeral, either. I've only cried a very few times in my life and actually, you were there for one of them—that day you released me from prison, but first had my father pretend to kill Misa and I . . . well, you remember. That night, when everyone had gone home, I was exhausted and just weary all over: I believed myself to be innocent, and I was still so frightened about what was going to happen to me. So fucking scared of dying—and you, my would-be murderer, were the one I turned to for comfort. I have no intention of letting you see that weakness again.

I didn't plan this, though I'm starting to think that I should have. It has proved to have been an excellent distraction from the Kira case, and from testing those fake rules. When I first wrote them in, of course, I wanted you to test them. That was the whole point, that you would see them and test them out, and that then Rem would have to kill you and Watari and I'd be free of the both of you. Oh, and Rem, which would have been such an excellent side benefit. I'm really starting to hate her, because she keeps giving me these looks which are saying *fix it, damn you, you'd better fix this*, and I . . . I don't know *how* to fix this.

I suppose I could just have her kill you, like she was going to in the first place. Eventually (I think) you'll get back around to the case, and then you'll test the rules and then you'll be dead.

Something strange happens inside my chest when I think of you dying. It feels as though something is squeezing my insides—my lungs, my heart, everything in there and I can't get enough air. It's awful, and I try not to think of it. But then I try to be stern with myself, tell myself that this has to happen for Kira's—for my—perfect world to become a reality. You are very much in the way of my vision of this world, and that will not be tolerated. I can't afford to tolerate it. I can't afford to . . . to like you, or whatever the hell this feeling is. I can't feel it.

But as I look at you and your faraway eyes, staring at the somewhat grisly scene on the computer screen, your pale fingers twitching above the control buttons, your lips twisted slightly downwards—and especially as I look at the platter of desserts next to you, untouched—I feel it again, stronger. I feel . . . sorry, and there's something else. I want to help you. I don't know how I would go about that. I'm not exactly in the business of helping people. Or, I am, I like to think that I am, but only through destructive means.

My own lips twist downwards as I think that. I've been increasingly hard on myself and my ideals ever since I regained my memories. It's been difficult, because I didn't expect myself to grow so much in my time with you, and then when I tried to fit the two sides of me back together, it hurt. Actually hurt, physical pain shooting up nerve endings and rushing into my brain, all my senses alert and screaming that something was wrong, something was hurting me, attacking me.

It still hurts, now, when I try to think about it so hard. And then I think that I've never tried so hard *not* to think about stuff in my life. Usually I overanalyze and pick everything apart. But now I don't. I can't. I'm afraid of what I'll find if I try to pick you apart, or worse, if I try to figure myself out.

You rewatch the video clip on your computer, frowning as you pause it and then hit the zoom button. You've been working on this silently ever since we got back here from the airport, and I haven't the heart to interrupt you. I did ask, once, if you wanted any help, but your silence was enough answer for me.

You were silent when the news came, too, and even when I asked to go to the funeral with you. You nodded, though, which everyone seemed grateful for. They didn't want you to go to England alone, I suppose.

I didn't know that you grew up in an orphanage. I mean, I guess I still don't know, but I inferred. Why else would you be so attached to the place? And I suppose Watari had something to do with its founding—since why would he be buried there if he wasn't?

There weren't too many children there, and those that were there, were silent. Well, some cried. Some looked like they recognized you, but none of them came up to you. It was hard even for me to stand next to you, you were so cold.

I'm sorry about Watari, I want to say. I said it once, said, "I'm sorry," to you. You just nodded, once, jerkily, and then went back to your task. The rest of the task force has even noticed that you're affected by this. Not that they're around now. They don't know that we're back from England, and I don't know that you or I will tell them. It seems peaceful here, with you, with just us.

"Yagami-kun," you say, and your voice is hoarse. I wonder if it's because you've spent so much time lately in silence.

I look up, over at you, as though I haven't been staring at you for the better part of the last hour. "Yes?" I ask.

Your thumb is hovering around your lips and your eyes don't leave the screen as you ask, "Why does Kira kill?"

I study your form, hunched over and turned slightly away from me, and then I watch your face, looking for any tiny flicker of emotion that would give you away. I've gotten good at detecting those over the past few months. But there's nothing, so I answer cautiously. "What do you mean, Ryuuzaki?"

You turn to face me now, and I can see by how you nip at your thumb somewhat harder than usual that you are annoyed with me. "Was my question unclear, Yagami-kun?" you ask.

"No, I understood the question," I answer, justifiably anxious about where you may be taking this. "I just don't understand . . . what you meant by it. What you meant by asking me about it."

Finally, your eyes rake up my figure and meet mine. "I mean, Yagami-kun, that I would like to know why Kira kills. Why you kill."

I'm still for a moment and then I sigh and sink into the nearest desk chair. "Ryuuzaki, I don't kill people." My tone is perfect—exasperated with a touch of lingering fear and the barest trace of amusement—so why do you look so unconvinced? "I'm not Kira," I finish, and then I'm surprised when you laugh—actually start laughing at me.

"Ryuuzaki?" I ask, and this time I don't have the fake the concern. You're laughing hard, and when I think about it for the barest second, I realize that you haven't had any kind of release since hearing about Watari's death. This is probably the closest you're going to get to crying. This flashes through my mind in less than a second, and I spend the next few dithering about what I ought to do about it. You think I'm Kira—you wouldn't be pleased if I tried to comfort you. But you also see me as Yagami Raito sometimes, and Raito is your friend, I think.

Finally, I stand and walk over to you. Hesitantly, I put one arm around you, expecting you to push me away, to snap at me, but instead you draw in a deep shuddering breath and turn your face into my shoulder.

The position is awkward, and it can't be giving you much comfort, so I manage to kneel on the floor and you follow my motions until we're both sitting there—in the middle of the investigation room, me kneeling and you with your face hidden, one hand tightly holding onto my sleeve, as if you're afraid to actually touch me.

You don't cry—like I said, I wouldn't know what to do if you did—but you breathe deeply, probably trying to get yourself under control. The laughter has stopped, and I'm grateful for that. It was too close to sobbing for my taste.

We sit there for a long time, and I start to think of what a picture we must make, L and Kira kneeling on the floor together; and although I think of you holding onto me, really I'm holding you just as tightly.

It is right there—right in the middle of the floor in the middle of a day in early November—that I realize that I don't want to kill you. I don't even really want to hurt you, although I think that maybe you do deserve a few well-placed snipes or a punch or two for the hell you put me through when I was (sort of) innocent.

It's not a protective instinct—that's something that I've occasionally felt for Sayu and I don't feel it for you now. I just . . . would like for you not to be hurt. I don't want to shield the pain, or take it for you. But I wish it weren't there. I'm sorry for you. I'm sorry with you.

I think that this is probably empathy—an experience I've never really had before. I also think that it kind of sucks because now there are two parts of me; one wants to keep you, and one knows that you need to die.

I feel like crying myself. I don't, of course. But there's a tightness in my throat that matches the squeezing feeling in my chest when I think of killing you, and my eyes feel sort of prickly, like pins and needles almost. It isn't pleasant.

I tighten my grip on you and then—because I need to break this silence before I can think anymore about what I'm going to do, because then I really will cry—I whisper, "I'm sorry."

I'm startled at my own voice, and from how you tense up, I can tell that you are too. I hadn't meant for the words to sound so . . . broken. You pull back and when your eyes meet mine, I can see that you know that I'm not just talking about Watari.

"Why do you kill?" you ask.

I roll my eyes. "I'm not—" and then I stop. Not of my own volition; because you have placed a hand over my mouth. As I narrow my eyes at you, truly frustrated now, I suddenly think of how strange this is. We're so close, sitting awkwardly together, hands and shoulders touching, but I don't feel uncomfortable at all. With other people, I tend to avoid physical contact. It doesn't frighten me—I just find it unsavory. But with you, it feels . . . natural.

"I know you are, Yagami-kun," you say. "I know it."

I pull my face away from your hand. "Don't interrupt me," I snap. "I'm not Kira, Ryuuzaki."

"Raito," you say, and your voice sounds like a dead thing—dry, tired, sad. "I know."

I'm silent then; I don't know what to say. Finally, I just mutter, "I suppose that nothing I say will change your mind."

"Not about that, no," you say, finally pulling away from me completely. I feel suddenly like I can breathe again, and at the same time I feel empty. It's strange. I don't like it. "So tell me," you say. "Act like you're pretending to be Kira, if you must keep up these tired pretenses. Why does Kira kill?"

I stop for a few seconds and think before I answer you. "You really don't know?" I ask.

"If I knew, Raito, I wouldn't be asking you," you say. "I'm not in the habit of asking for clarification, much less asking when it's something I already understand."

"I suppose . . . I suppose it's because he wants to make the world better. Because he's seen what humans can and will do to each other when left to their own devices."

"What about freedom of choice?" you ask. I look at you closely, to see if you're making fun of me, but your eyes are dark and serious, so I continue.

"Look at history, Ryuuzaki," I answer. "People will always choose tyranny over anarchy when things get bad. Ultimately, order—the idea that they won't be killed in their own home, or robbed, or raped, or taken advantage of in business or school—wins out over the desire to be free. It happens over and over again."

"Just because it happens, that doesn't make it right," you say.

"It happens because people want it to happen," I argue. "Even if after they're in power, dictators abuse it, there's no way they would be able to get power in the first place if they didn't have the consent of the people."

"Is Kira a dictator, then?" you ask.

I start to shake my head, but then I pause. "Maybe," I agree. "Maybe, but once he's no longer needed, he won't have to keep power."

"People aren't just good and bad, Raito," you say. "Everyone has the capacity to be both." Here you pause and look straight at me. "Even you."

"I know not everything's black and white," I say. "But some people deserve to die."

I expect you to snap back at me, to tell me that that may be true but it's not my decision to make, but instead you are silent. You stare off into the distance, looking at something that I'm sure I wouldn't be able to see, even if I turned my head.

You murmur softly, "It's not for humans to decide," but before I have time to respond to that, you continue. I'm not expecting what you say next, which is, "I don't want to die." It's a whisper, as though you're afraid someone will hear you if you say it any louder.

Instinctively, I grab your hand, and before I've had time to think about what I'm doing, I say, "I don't either."

You're looking at our hands, but when I speak, you look back up at me. "Why does one of us have to die?" you demand quietly. "It doesn't make sense. It's like . . . it's completely reversing all progress we've made as a race. Even if we're something like oil and water and we can't mix, at least oil and water don't destroy one another. They exist alongside each other. If two views cannot exist at one time, then we are not fit to be called human."

"I never called myself human," I say, though I regret the words as soon as they leave my lips. I hope that's not all the admission you'll need to imprison and kill me. But still . . . I can read you, and you're not acting like you want to kill me.

Your lips twist into a wry smile. "No, you don't," you agree. "You call yourself god, immortal."

"And you are an ideal," I say. "A letter representation of justice."

"It's funny, isn't it?" you murmur, your fingers tightening around mine. I'd forgotten we were still holding hands. Strange. This whole situation is strange. I wonder if I might be dreaming.

"What's funny about that?" I ask.

"Just that we both suffer from delusions of grandeur thanks to our unique status as genii," you shrug.

I laugh at that, and your lips even twitch up in response. It's a relief to finally laugh after how serious the conversation was getting. I was starting to get worried.

You sigh and look back over at the screen, which is still paused and zoomed in on a man's face. I follow your gaze and ask, "Is that him?"

You nod, silently, and finally stand back up. I stand too and follow you over to the computer. "What happened?" I ask.

You shrug and fiddle with the mouse a bit. "It was just . . . just something painfully ordinary," you finally tell me. "He was just mugged. Watari gave him what he asked for—his money, of course. But he took it and shot him."

I can tell that your monotone is straining, that you're straining to keep everything under control. I can't tell if you're sad or angry. Maybe both.

"I didn't know you were so close to him," I finally say.

Your eyes are focused on the computer screen when you answer. "Yes," you say distantly. "Watari meant a great deal to me."

"I'm sorry," I say again. And then—God, I have no idea what possessed me to do this (no, I do, of course I do, but I can't say it)—I lean over to you and kiss your cheek.

It's not as though we haven't kissed before. We did, plenty, while we were chained together. We did other things, too, though never . . . well. You didn't trust me enough, and I wasn't about to submit to you that way. But ever since I regained my memories, you haven't really touched me.

You do now, though. As I start to pull away, your hand moves through my hair—God, that feels good—and you reach around to pull me back towards you, towards your mouth this time.

Even though I love this, these kisses that are too rough to be called tenderness but too intimate to be called hatred, I can't help but think of your motivations. If you really do think I'm Kira—and of course you do—why on earth would you kiss me like this?

My eyes slide shut as we sink to the floor together and I lose myself in this inexplicable feeling—of your hand at the base of my neck, pulling me in harder as you nip at my lower lip and then your tongue darts out to trace patterns on the inside of my mouth. Your other hand rests on the left side of my chest, just above the heartbeat and I think that that must be some kind of symbolism, but then your lips slip down to my throat, sucking hard, and I lose that train of thought completely.

You weren't this rough before—I think probably because it would leave a mark. But now you don't seem to care, and I hear myself moan as you move down the column of my throat, sucking and biting and dipping your tongue into the hollow at the base.

You've got me halfway undressed by the time any of my senses return to me, and then they only do because you bite too hard on tender skin, causing more pain than pleasure.

"Stop, stop it," I gasp. You either don't hear me or don't care, because you're not stopping and suddenly, I can't take it—I can't do this, I have to kill you. What kind of a person would I be to kill someone I'd done this sort of thing with? I couldn't . . . I don't know if I could do it.

I pull away, taking your hands in mine. "Ryuuzaki, stop," I mutter. You look at me, seemingly surprised.

"Don't call me that," you mutter back. Your cheeks are flushed and your eyes are slightly glazed and it's all I can do to stop myself from touching you again.

"Call you—what?" I ask. Damn you, you're not making any sense. What game are you playing now? Do you think I'm stupid? I won't let you win even a little ground in this match.

"Ryuuzaki," you say, grimacing.

I start buttoning my shirt back up. I can't stand it—I can't stand to feel close to you, knowing that I'm just going to kill you soon. "Why not?" I ask.

"I don't like it," you answer. "I only chose it as . . . a remembrance, of sorts. A reminder. But I don't need it anymore."

"A reminder of what?"

You think about that for a moment. "Of what I stand for, I suppose."

"What should I call you then?"

"Lawliet."

I frown. The name—it's sort of pretty. Definitely not Japanese. "Another alias?" I guess.

"No," you say, sinking down until you're sitting on the floor. "It's my name."

I don't move. I don't think, I don't even breathe. I just look at you. "What?" I finally breathe. So quiet it's barely a question. I sit down next to you.

"It's my name," you repeat. "L Lawliet." When I don't say anything, you continue, "Watari and I were the only ones who knew it. Now you and I are."

"L," I say—well, stammer, really. I'm stalling for time, I know I am. Time for myself, not for you. What do you expect me to do with this information, L Lawliet? You know I'm Kira. Is this a trap? A death wish? "But—but if you think I'm Kira, then why would you tell me that?"

You look at me and sigh, pulling your knees up to your chest and hugging them there. "It was too lonely," you finally say. "I'm used to being alone, but not like this. Not so much. It was too much to be the only one who knew what I am. Who I am."

"Why tell me?"

"Yagami Raito is my friend," you say, simply. "Kira is not. But Raito—yes, I think he is."

"I am," I hasten to reassure you. I'm still a bit blinded by your sudden trust in me. I'm also trying to think of how I can use this, and what you might be doing now to trick me.

And then . . . it is silent. We are silent. For a very long time, I am watching you and you are staring at the computer screen in front of you. You don't move and the screen doesn't change, but your gaze doesn't waver, either. And then, finally, finally, you whisper, "It's all right, Raito. You can write it down."

I'm startled out of my thoughts and my lips twist downwards as I consider what you just said. "I don't want to kill you," I say, having decided that that cannot be used as evidence against me. "I don't want to write your name."

"What changed, then?" you ask quietly. "You did want me dead, just as I swore to kill you. What changed your mind?"

I want to answer—I want so desperately to explain how I'm feeling, even though I myself have no idea exactly what it is, but common sense prevails over emotion, and instead I shake my head. "I never wanted you dead, L. I'm not—"

"God, don't say it!" you hiss, unfolding from your cramped position and looking suddenly very dangerous. "Don't deny it once more or I will not be held accountable for my own

actions. I am right and I know I am right, and nothing you or your father, or anyone else says will change my mind. Even if I cannot convict you. Even if there is no evidence. You are Kira."

I'm angry now, enough to do something that I might regret later, so instead of answering your challenge, I demand, "Is this really the time to be arguing about that? Shouldn't we be trying to find Watari's murderer?"

You give me a disgusted look and then sit down, pointing to the screen. "I already have," you say, and I get up and look over your shoulder. On the first screen is a CCTV image of the man who assaulted and murdered Watari, and on the second is a criminal record with his mug shot and stats underneath it.

All the anger towards you goes out of me and then redirects itself towards this smug looking killer. "Is he in custody, then?" I ask.

Your anger seems to be gone, too, and you let your chin rest on your knees as you stare at his image. "No," you say.

I'm halfway through pulling up a chair to sit down by you, but when I hear that, I just sink into the chair where I am. "What are you waiting for?" I demand.

"He is from Hong Kong," you reply dully, eyes still on the screen. "The Chinese will not hand him over to my custody. They have never liked me, and say that a sketchy video feed is no proof. But his travel dates match as well, and the computer recognized his image. I know it is him."

"And is there no way to get to him?" I ask. "No contact you have in China?"

You shrug again. "No," you say. "It is a weakness of mine."

I wonder briefly why you're sharing your weaknesses with me. It seems strange—but then, you're already acting completely out of character by telling me your name.

You take me by surprise when you suddenly swing around in your chair to face me. "You really don't want to kill me?" you ask quietly. "If you want to keep up the pretense—even if you were Kira, you wouldn't want to kill me?"

I hesitate; I consider not answering. I should want to kill you—I should be ecstatic, overjoyed that you've told me your name and made my job that much easier. But ultimately, I decide to nod. That cannot incriminate me entirely, can it?

You stare at me for a moment longer, your eyes tight on mine, as though trying to dig through my secrets with just your gaze. Finally, you nod back slowly. "Why?" you ask.

That I won't answer. I like you, yes, but I won't humiliate myself for you.

You wait for the answer that I won't give, and finally, you nod again. "Very well," you say.

You stand and I almost flinch. I don't want to think of what you might do now that you have an almost-confession out of me. Damn it, L Lawliet, how could you get me into this state?

But you don't even head towards me. Instead, you walk towards the table where the Death Note is sitting and you pick it up in that strange two-fingered grip of yours. You're looking at the book, flipping through it, and then you come to a completely blank page and you set the Note down again.

Your back is to me, so I can't tell what you're doing anymore. But just as I get up to see, I hear your voice. "The last two rules are false, aren't they Raito?"

"How should I know?" I ask crossly. If you think you're tired of playing pretend about Kira, L, think of how exhausting it is for me at this point.

"I only ask because you were in your cell for nearly two months and you didn't write in the Note, and yet you are still alive," you continue, and your voice is strangely strained.

"That's because I'm not—" I begin, ready to protest my innocence again, but I'm interrupted yet again. This time it's not your hand covering my mouth and it's not you jumping in to lecture me.

No. This time, it's you turning around, with the Death Note in one hand and a ballpoint pen in the other. And it's the fact that I can see scrawled on the otherwise blank page: Huang Ya.

It's the name of the man who killed Watari, and I look up at you, uncomprehendingly. "What?" is all I manage to get out. In some part of my mind, I can almost understand what is happening here. But everywhere else, I'm confused and I really don't like the feeling.

"It is as you said, Raito," you say simply as you walk over towards me. "There are those who deserve to die." Your face is set and grim and yet—I can see an excitement lurking just behind your eyes.

"You said that it was not for humans to decide," I remind you. I don't dare to hope—but what if you mean it, what if you mean to join my side? We would be unstoppable, I wouldn't have to give you up, everything would just be *right*.

You smile a bit when you hear my token protest. "But Raito," you say, "You know as well as I that we are not just humans. I am Justice and you have the power and the resolve to kill whom you will."

I take a brief moment to compose myself, and when I speak my voice is cool and skeptical. "You mean to join Kira?" I ask.

"I mean to make a partnership with you, Raito, so that we may both live," you say.

I don't say anything, but I'm sure that I must look unconvinced, because you go on.

"I don't believe that we are oil and water," you continue. "I have thought about it, and I realize that I do not wish to go back to my isolation as it was before I met you. And I believe that you feel the same. I mean to make a partnership, a compromise between us."

I straighten. "Compromise?" I repeat, my voice cool.

"Less purification," you qualify. "Less leading by fear, less unnecessary killing. We'll decide together who deserves death."

"Why—"

"Why should you deal with me, when you were doing fine on your own?" you ask. "Because first, I am prepared to see this through. And because second, you have no idea what preparations I have made in the case of my death. They are extensive, I assure you. I have enough evidence to convict you *now*, as a matter of fact, so you have nothing to lose by joining me. And finally because with the two of us—with Justice and Death, if you will—there will be no one who will stop us."

Slowly, as I begin to believe you, as all this begins to sink in, I smile and I nod. I don't miss the relieved expression that highlights your thin face as you lean in to kiss me again.

You don't have to die. My—our world—can still come to be.

I can keep you.

And—I won.

A/N: I really like this oneshot, though I have considered writing just one more chapter from L's POV. We'll see how busy I am come the holidays XD

One of my most favoritest reviewers, Bligy, requested that this one be reposted, so instead of Asylum, I give you Funeral. Next chapter of Asylum coming soon!

Thanks so much for reading--let me know what you thought!